



## Fostering Good Sleep Patterns

(Adapted from Bright Futures in Practice, Mental Health)

- Put your baby down for sleep while he is still awake so that he can practice calming himself. He may do things like suck his fingers, rock his body back and forth, or finger a blanket or a stuffed animal. A shirt you have worn close to your body for several days can be a helpful reminder of you in the crib.
- Stay in the room when your baby is first trying to fall asleep on her own. If your baby is not settling after 5 minutes, place your hand on her or sing to see if that helps. Try not to make eye contact, as this may keep your baby awake.
- Encourage both morning and afternoon naps for your infant under 12 months. Try to get some rest during your baby's nap.
- During night feedings, try not to play with your baby or talk to him too much. Keep the lights low or off. This will help your baby to have a successful feeding and get back to sleep.
- When your baby wakes at night and can't fall back to sleep after 3 minutes, let him know that you are there. If your child is crying, try to comfort him, but don't give an extra feeding if he doesn't normally need one at that time. Attention to babies is not spoiling; it helps to create a sense of security.
- If your baby seems fussy, try sticking to a regular sleep routine and try to let her sleep more.

## Limit Setting At Bedtime

You don't need a lot of rules to make bedtime go more smoothly. But your child will understand and accept limits better when they also help make the rules. You can make up bedtime rules with your child by discussing the reasons for the rules. Getting a good night's sleep is important to being happy, feeling good and staying healthy.

Here are some helpful suggestions for limit setting techniques at bedtime.

- When you make a request at bedtime, get your child's attention, and then only ask once. For example, "John look at me. [Wait for child to look at you.] Please go brush

your teeth." If they do not follow your instruction take them with you while you do the task. Praise any cooperation your child puts forth. This is called "One request and then move."

- Sometimes parents will disagree about how to best put a child to bed. And it's true that rules work best when used in the same way by both parents. However, your child can get used to different bedtime rules with different people. It is better to expect your child to adapt to these differences than to show your conflicts about them.
- Sometimes kids will beg and cry for "just one more" story or kiss before bedtime. You can give into the "only one more" but be firm and don't do more than that. Another technique is to give your child one "Bedtime Ticket" (a 3 x 5 card) which they can cash in for one more kiss or drink of water.
- Be flexible when you need to be. Sometimes bedtime rules should be enforced flexibly to meet the needs of a special occasion, such as being with an evening visitor. It's better to change the rule before the child asks, so you don't look manipulated. Instead of weakness, this shows a healthy kind of flexibility.